

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION

[The author toiled hard for seven years
in completing this book.]

(P. 245.) Praise be to God that this royal treasure of record, this register of knowledge, the syllabus of the volume of wisdom, the summary of administrative writings, the tablet of instruction in the school of learning, the exemplar of ceremonial among men of understanding, the code of polity of the imperial court, this patent of morality in the audience-hall of justice and mercy, has been brought to completion. Much labour had to be endured and many difficulties overcome before the inception of this antidote for the world's constitution, this prophylactic for those envenomed by sensuality and suffering could be successfully undertaken. Many a dark night passed into morning and many a long day grew to eve, ere this mine of the diadem of eternal happiness, this pearl of the throne of everlasting sovereignty could be publicly displayed. What warring of the capacity with the natural constitution took place, how many a struggle between myself and my heart drove me to distraction ere the count of this investigation fleeting as the world, the result of this search deluding as the waters of a mirage, could be set down ! Prayers were poured forth before the Almighty throne, supplications were offered up on the threshold of divine light, in order that this amulet on the arm of the wise, this magic spell of those who love knowledge, written in my heart's blood, might have the spirit of life breathed into its lettered form.

What toil endured through love that work so planned,
Watered by tears and blood, should rooted stand !

Alas ! Alas ! that one nurtured by the divine bounty and long suffused by the radiance of truth, should defile his tongue with murmurs of toil and labour, and record his harrowing of soul and his travail on the tablet of illustration !

[The author's gratitude to Akbar for his encouragement and guidance during the composition of this book : its high value to mankind.]

It is through the wondrous workings of His Majesty's favour and the spell of his enduring prerogative that this dissertation has been set forth and a great work brought to its conclusion. That cynosure of divine unity to the virtuous, by the efficacy of a direct intention and the probity of unswerving rectitude appointed a treasurer to the stores of his wisdom and sagacity, and gave him access to the recesses of his sanctuary. That gem of singlemindedness, in honour of the Supreme Being and in thanksgiving for ever increasing bounties, brought forth a work of knowledge by a (P. 246) master-spirit of wisdom for the profit of inquirers, and a royal mandate from the tabernacle of sanctity for the seekers of happiness. By a sublime favour he endowed this fortunate and loyal nature with the capacity of reading and understanding it, and by his all-embracing condescension permitted me to reproduce somewhat thereof as came within my limited intelligence and to be honoured with the stewardship of the divine bounty. Far and near, friend and stranger, participate therein, and all classes of mankind illumine their minds with the splendour of truth. Thanks be to God that in these noble maxims of conduct, the visible world finds its remedy, and the things of the invisible are by them harmoniously regulated !

The light that o'er seven spheres celestial plays,
Wins all its radiance from imperial rays.
The blind need now no more a staff to take,
While those that see find luminous their ways.

The garden of prosperity blooms unto good-will and for joy has come a day of festival. The eye opens in cheerfulness and the night of sorrow has passed. Many a truth in the orders of nature and grace, and many incidents of binding and loosing have been set down in despite of fraudulent concealers of the truth, and an illumination of wisdom is displayed for the guidance of the sightless and faint of heart and for the purblind that lose their way. Through a lofty destiny for which sincere loyalty is another name, a new canopy of wisdom has been erected, and the duty of thanksgiving which is the final cause, has reached its accomplishment.

In honour of my liege, the king,
With all true loyalty I bring
A cypress set in garden fair,
Wherein shall trysting all repair,
And with full draughts of wine elate,
Its happy growth commemorate.

[Firdausi wrote his *Book of Kings* in 30 years, but earned obloquy by demanding from his royal master payment in gold commensurate with the size of his epic. Abul Fazl, in a nobler spirit has written his *Book of Akbar* in seven years out of pure gratitude to his master, who has made his subjects happy and prosperous and set up a model of wise and beneficent government before all mankind.]

Notwithstanding the coming and going of so many leaders of the caravans of knowledge and the gathering together of treatises from the schools of learning, to-day only can the purity of the jewel of wisdom be assayed and its weight tested by another scale—now only is sovereign intellect arrayed on the throne of empire and its sway enforced by a later ordinance. Now must the field of gift and offering be made wide and the festal melodies and pæans of success resound, but not as Firdausi, who in a

grovelling spirit, fell into the aberration of greed and made the curtain of his honour an object for the haggling of traffic. He was a seller of words and knew not their value. Thinking them interchangeable with a few pieces of metal, like shameless hucksters of the market, he lost his credit in stickling for price. *He* sought to make rateable worth incalculable, and the measurable measureless. *This* servitor at the table of multitudinous royal bounties records in this work his gratitude for transcendent favours, and signalizes the wondrous dispensations of the world-adorning Creator of the universe.

Had naught but gold this volume from me wrung,
Life would have ended ere a pearl were strung;
'Twas love that planned the task, for through such strain
Could only love my feeble voice sustain.

Firdausi took thirty years of labour to secure eternal execration, while I have borne with seven years of toil for the sake of everlasting glory. He fused his worth into the cast of verse which is a matrix of determinate shape, and I have strung into writing, gems of the purest water through the infinite expanse of prose. [P. 247]

My pen its point deep in my heart's blood dyes
To write such prose as far all verse outvies;
For prose in its degree doth verse excel,
As unbored pearls the rarest price compel.

What connection is there between the servitor of the Lord and the worshipper of gold? between thanksgiving and lamentation? Self interest let fall a veil before his clear vision in that he sought largesse in the laboratory of genius from the great ones of the earth. Had no defect obscured his sight in his dealings with others, he would not have entered so devious a path nor spoken a line for lucre, and

would have secured the possession of the jewel of magnanimity.

When thought of self intrudes doth genius flee,
And the heart blinds the eyes that may not see.
The beam in his own vision what though plain,
The critic quick to cavil seeks in vain ;
Absorbed in greed the faults of others hears,
But from his own withholds unwilling ears.

But apart from this consideration that in the markets of wisdom, works that delight the heart cannot be purchased by the gold and silver of the world, and that such gems of price are not to be weighed against coin, by his grace of diction and the charm of his verse he strove to immortalize his name, and has left behind him a noble and gracious scion in the full vigour of youth that will survive to ages. To the rich and prosperous it adds another dignity : the wise that love truth it favours with another aid. The simple-minded that seek after happiness are familiarized with the gains and losses of life, and it pours out for the many who resent the disappointments of toil, the healing balm of resignation. To the faint of heart it lends courage : to those who have the craft of the fox it gives the boldness of the lion and the fury of the alligator. Upon the intolerant and narrow-minded it bestows cheerfulness and large views, and stimulates the magnanimous and raises them to the pinnacle of greatness.

Although to outward appearance he was but rendering a service to the great ones of the earth, he was implicitly bearing the jewels of his wisdom to the market of appreciation. Had he not been under the influence of cupidity, nor exposed his penetrating genius to the spoil of misplaced desire, he could never have been sufficiently grateful for the divine favour in the opportunity of winning the applause and admiration of mankind. Nay, had he possessed any

sense of justice and any knowledge of the world, besides this rare product of intellect, he would have carried some substantial offering to the throne of majesty, in order that the royal approval might be the means of displaying the quality of his jewel, and that he might bequeath as a gift of price, a memorial to his successors in the pursuit of intellectual fame.

Praise be to God! that by the divine grace and providential assistance, I have not set my heart upon the composition of this work with a view to approbation or to listen to my own praises, into which pitfall of the imagination so many have sunk, nor suffered my natural constitution to be trodden under foot by ambition, not even with regard¹ to the large field of its acquired characteristics, far less its innate qualities in any abundance.

He who is deficient in a lofty spirit and noble sentiments is ensnared by a desire of worldly goods. But even the stranger knows that the [P. 248] odour of misrepresentation has not entered my nostrils, and the alien recognises in me a critical judge. What analogy is there between the painted silks of China and the raw yarn of a hair-rope maker? between a keen blade of Egypt and a piece of coarse iron? How can the priceless gem of truth descend to the level of worldly potsherds? Why exchange eternal bliss for the silvered inanities that soon decay? And especially at this time when by the wondrous workings of destiny and a smiling fortune, priceless jewels are but as gravel before the palace of auspiciousness, and my loyal spirit, illumined by the rays of wisdom, has found rest on the heights of joy. Were I even destitute of the goods that pass from hand to hand in the market-square of the material world, and fortune through malice or fickleness, sent not wealth to serve me, I would never entertain such a feeling nor approve in my

¹ I should alter the punctuation of the text and place the stop after *tabi'at-i-u.* [Jarrett.]

own person such imprudence in affairs. On the contrary, my first thought is the praise of God, in that the deeds of majesty have been illustrated by commendable description. The second consideration of the mind with a view to human needs is that the eminent men of future time and the learned of the present, may bring up gems of purest ray from this fathomless sea to beautify the mansions of their deeds. Had I possessed a lofty spirit, I should not have descended from the summit of the heights of unity to the level of polytheism, but what is to be done? I quote the words used by the leader of the enlightened minds of the past, the spiritual doctor (Maulānā Rumi)—

Since I am linked with those who see awry,
Idolater ! I, too, must preach idolatry.

[Wise and good men work to secure the blessings of God and the good opinion of mankind at the same time, and they succeed in both by reason of their honesty, self-control, and unselfish sense of duty. Abul Fazl's success in life illustrates this truth.]

Though every one cannot comprehend the object of this fast in the morning of existence and this mirage in the noon of life, I think that all should perceive and bear in mind that the exertions of the wise and the good should be restricted to two objects, and the supreme purpose of pursuit in those of lofty penetration and wakeful destiny should not exceed these. The *first* is to secure the benediction of God and to lay the foundations of a stately fabric in the pleasant meads of His holy pleasure, and this is the means to eternal life and the ornamature of enduring bliss. Those who choose that country

^a This language, considering the dedication of the volume and the eye under which it was written, cannot be taken as an expression of regret at his accredited apostasy from Islam and conversion to Hinduism, but to imply the necessity of following the language of conventionality though pledged to the support of his master's creed. Nevertheless his sincerity in his adhesion to Akbar's faith was suspected. See Vol. I. Biography xvii.

for their abode go not down unto death, and the sound of body therein behold not the face of sickness. Its vigorous dwellers know not of debility, nor those that thrive there, of decay. Wealth does not decline in poverty, and loss of vision enters not therein. This is to be obtained only by a sincere intention and the possession of the four excellent qualities together with the avoidance of the eight vicious characteristics of which books of wisdom have fully treated. The *second* is a good repute in this fleeting world, which signifies an enduring existence and a second life. Although this also is accomplished through the same source of enlightenment by which a virtuous disposition is formed, yet it is chiefly secured by a smooth tongue and an open hand, and sincerity of intention and rectitude of mind are not imperative. Blest is he who by the divine auspices links the first with the second, and prospers in the temporal as well as in the spiritual world. The means adopted by the seekers of truth to participate in social enjoyments and yet to win peace with some comfort to their consciences, are these, that with strenuous endeavour and by the favour of fortune, [P. 249] they separate good resolutions and virtuous conduct from the disorders of self-regard and the labyrinth of hypocrisy, and submitting their minds to the dictates of sovereign reason and the divine pleasure, live apart from the blame and praise of mankind; and the profit which these simple dealers obtain from their inestimable lives and the advantage secured by their exertions, are a perpetual remembrance and an illustrious name.

The leaders in the four quarters of the visible and invisible worlds, and the deep thinkers that betake themselves both to occupation and retirement, who through their comprehensive views and wide survey of the field of knowledge penetrate the mysteries of these two sublime principles, sustain by the grace of God the weight of the two worlds on the shoulders of their capacity, and in the strength of the Almighty arm move lightly under the burden. The harmo-

nious operation of these two opposite interests, one alone of which is rarely attainable under the most capable and statesmanlike administrators even under the sanction of penal law, is by them so successfully carried out under the guidance of celestial favour that the primordial intelligence of nature itself stands amazed and the wonder-working heavens are confounded. By them, moreover, the sources of advantage and detriment, both temporal and spiritual, are commanded, and these antagonistic dual elements simultaneously co-operate in the establishment of festal conviviality of intercourse.

[Akbar's unrivalled greatness as a ruler and Abul Fazl's duty to record His Majesty's great acts and rules for the benefit of posterity.]

And for exemplar of such a one, lo! from the brow of this prosperous reign that irradiates the face of the State, what splendour is reflected and as a glory shines upon the raiser of its auspicious banner in this our happy age! For today the skies revolve at his will and the planets in their courses move by his sublimity.

Akbar, the king, illumines India's night,

And is as a lamp in the court of the House of Timour.

The heart exults at his mention and the tongue vaunts his praise. May the Almighty vouchsafe long life to this incomparable wonder of the kingdom of wisdom, and eternal happiness to his subjects. This sovereign of the orders of nature and grace, by the light of his God-given intelligence and the night-beacon of his powerful will, has so organized the measureless limits of these two dominions and moves through them with such prudence and sagacity, that aspiring discerners of each form of progress look to no other than him, and each and all consider as their own this pearl of wisdom that enlightens the world. Since the time that eloquence and knowledge of affairs have existed and the highway of literary composition been frequented, so exquisite and exact a

co-operation of two antagonistic principles in a single hallowed person has never been recorded—a person who is the meeting of the oceans of church and state, the fountain-head of temporal and spiritual order—who prepares the litters of travel while yet abiding in his native land¹—a lamp for those who gather in privacy, a solver of trammels to those who are in bonds, a balm for the open wounds of the broken-hearted. Manifold worldly cares raise no dust of defect in his heart that loves retirement, and perpetual prayer and a concentrated mind suffer no breeze of pre-occupation to play upon the necessary duties of his station. Thus he has outward obligation with liberty of spirit.

Lo! from his brow behold the pure of sight
 God's love and knowledge beam with radiant light.
 A crowned monarch—a throne's rightful heir—
 Lord of the world—the kingdom's founder there!

[P. 250.]

It is imperative upon the ambition of all masters of eloquence to decorate the ears and throat of the age with a description of the virtues of such a choice specimen of the court of existence and to adorn with its beauty the bosom and skirt of Time. A rare treasure will thus be prepared for future travellers in the caravans of being, and seekers from afar will come into the possession of knowledge. Although the spheres themselves in their courses by gesture and speech, tell thereof and transmit it to succeeding generations, yet by the workings of destiny accidents befall and the thread of continuity is often severed. When, however, works are written to record these wondrous deeds and they are inscribed upon the tablets of time, the hand of vicissitude less frequently affects them and they endure to distant ages. A fabric that is laid upon virtue, the summit of the porches thereof reaches

¹ That is, preparing for the world to come while yet in this, or facilitating the salvation of others.

to the pinnacles of the seventh heaven, and a foundation whereon fortune builds is not sapped by revolving cycles.

Behold the recompense of noble toil
That guards the Cæsars' halls from Time's despoil !

It is evident that of mighty monarchs of old there is no memorial except in the works of the historians of their age, and no trace of them but in the chronicles of eloquent and judicious annalists, yet the ravages of time obliterate them not. Of the splendour of the House of Buwayh no record exists save in the labours of the pens of Sābi⁴ and Muhallabi, and the noble pages of Rudaki, U'nsari and U'tbi alone tell of the glories of the kings of Ghazni.

Mahmud hath many a palace raised on high,
That with the moon might well dispute the sky :
Yet of all these no stone doth now remain,
While Time doth roll o'er U'nsari in vain.

⁴ Abu Ishāq Ibrāhim-b-Hilāl, as-Sābi or the Sabeian, author of some celebrated Epistles, was clerk of the Baghdad Chancery office in which he acted as secretary to the Caliph al-Muti l'llāh and to l'zzu'd Daulah Bakhtyār of the family of Buwayh the Daylomite. He was born about A.H. 320 (A.D. 932), and died in 384 (A.D. 994.) He wrote a history of the Buwayh dynasty under the title of *Tāju'l Milal* or *Tāju'l Daylamiyah*.

Al-Muhallabi was descended from Ibn Abi Sufra al-Azdi and was appointed Wazir by Mu'izzu'd Daulah Ibn Buwayh in A.H. 339 (A.D. 950). Ibn Khallakān says that his powerful influence and firm administration, as well as his acquaintance with literature, made him celebrated. He was born in A.H. 291 (A.D. 903) and died in A.H. 352 (963), and was buried at Baghdad. A few of his verses are given by his biographer.

Rudaki flourished in the reign of Amir Nasr, son of Ahmad of the Samānide dynasty, and was extraordinarily favoured by that prince. He turned the Arabic translation of Pilpay's 'Fables' into Persian verse in A.H. 313 (A.D. 925), and was the first who wrote a *Diwān* or collection of odes in Persian. He died in A.H. 343 (A.D. 954). Beale. U'nsari lived in the court of Mahmud of Ghazni and wrote an heroic poem on the deeds of Sultān Mahmud. He was also the author of a *Diwān*. He ranked not only as one of the first poets in that celebrated court, but was versed in all the learning of that age. His death is placed variously in A.H. 1040 and 1049. For U'tbi, see Vol. II.

Whosoever comprehends this talisman of prudence this spell of enlightened research, and appreciates these characters of thought and this lawful sorcery, will perceive this much, that my intention is to apprise far and near of these two attributes of high sovereignty and to lay the stable foundations of an enduring dominion. By this means the writer will secure a determinate sustenance from these divine treasures and a large provision from the table of manifold graces.

This lasting work I consecrate to Fame,
And to all time commemorate his name;
Above its page its syllables enrolled
Shall turn the pen that writes them into gold.

But if through the strange effects of self-interest such fact is unperceived and this pious intention is hidden from his view, at least this measure of knowledge will be secured and the collyrium of vision in this sufficiency will be prepared, that the design of the mind that employs the pen and the object of this benevolent purpose is the happiness of the people [P. 251] at large and the prosperity of the commonwealth.

[This history is intended to serve as a lesson-book of political science for the instruction of mankind and as a moral treatise for the practical teaching of subjects in the right conduct of life.]

The primary purpose of these annals of wisdom is the distinguishing of right from wrong, for the feet of many have been worn in the search of this recognition and have effected nothing; and secondly, to appreciate the results of virtuous and vicious conduct, of which this work is full. From the one he will learn how to garnish and sweep his house, from the other, to order the ways of his life. When he meets with prosperity and joy, finding no trace of those that have passed away, he will not admit the inroads of

presumption; and if sorrow oppress him when among such as have gone before, no exemplars thereof remain, he will not surrender himself to its sway, but among the accidents of life, seated upon the prayer-carpet of enlightenment, he will be assiduous in praise and supplication before the Supreme Giver, and from the importance and helplessness of the strong that are no more, he will perfectly comprehend the power of the Omnipotent hand. Dumb as I am and dejected of heart, what are these vain imaginings and this apparatus of chronicle and pen-craft! What connection is there between enemies of the flesh who love retirement, and the showy and affected scribblers of the world? And what analogy between those who abate the price of their own wares and the displayers of adulterated goods?

My thoughts do modestly my works decry
While Gebirs, Moslems hawking run, "who'll buy?"

[Abul Fazl's early studies—his mental conflict and despair.]

How shall I write of the strange ways of fortune and the delusive workings of destiny? In the beginnings of knowledge, I was overwhelmed with sorrow at the thought of existence, and at sacred places and auspicious times I prayed for release from the flesh. But, unawares, my spirit drew me by degrees to the school of research, and in confusion of heart which leads men astray, I sought the world. The ordinary course of learning was opened before me, and my mind became stored with ample measure of knowledge which raised in me an extraordinary arrogance. Under the guidance of a happy fortune, from a perusal of the works of the ancients, my mind was convinced that men must necessarily be comprised under three classes. The *first* is characterized by evil disposition and conduct, and this is evidenced in the traducing of one's neighbour and disclosing his faults. The *second* by good intentions and virtuous purposes; and the

possessor of these they describe as half a man. From amiableness in his judgments and a large tolerance of views, he speaks charitably of all men. The *third* by a lofty spirit and eminent virtue; and these reveal the perfect man. The master of these qualities from transcendent elevation of mind, regards not mankind at all, and, therefore, much less virtue and vice in the abstract. Objective ideas find no entrance into his mind. His contemplation ever traverses the field of his own heart, and discovering his own defects, he labours to remedy them, and finally he adorns the sanctuary of his soul with the true principles of virtue in the hope of attaining by their means to the goal of deliverance in the fruition of eternal bliss.⁵ When I read these seductive and winning numbers on the dice-tables of wisdom, I woke somewhat from my slumber and began to inquire. Withdrawing from worldly concerns, I fell to a critical introspection and began to transcribe the roll of my sins. When I had traversed a portion of this terrible road, veils in fold on fold were suspended before my vision. It [P. 252] seemed as though I could not advance a step, and save a few venial errors which I had committed in my youth, I believed myself innocent. As the very delusion of this mocking fancy awoke me to consciousness, I was not undone by my spiritual enemies. I was compelled to turn back and alighted at the first station of abstraction from being, and made the transcription of the failings of my fellow creatures a mirrored reflection of my own. I thus became aware of many reprehensible qualities. In this ghostly and spiritual warring and distress of mind and body, leaving the recess of seclusion, I came to the court of His Majesty and the star of my fortune rose on the horizon of desire.

[Abul Fazl's mind was liberalised and his spirits exhilarated by his contact with Akbar.]

⁵ The influence of the Sanskrit Schools of Philosophy is here very distinct. This passage breathes the spirit of the Vedanta.

By his great condescension His Majesty resolved my doubts, and I surmounted the heights of the visible and invisible worlds. I was honoured with the guardianship of the treasure of truth and entrusted with the keys of familiar intercourse, as has been briefly adverted to at the close of the first and second books. My heart emptied itself forth, and a treatise on morals was composed. A new life arose in the framework of language. For a long period the provision of bodily sustenance, the furnishing of which is approved in the truth-desiring eyes of sovereign reason, made my mind uneasy. What I had read in ancient works, occasioned only further bewilderment. One morning I craved for a scintillation from the court of the lord of light, and sought the exhibition of the talisman that resolved all difficulties. And as fortune befriended me and my heart was attentive, a refulgence from the luminary of grace shed its rays and the wondrous enigma was solved, and it was made clear that daily provision was under the pledge of royal justice and the acceptance of duty by grateful servants, as I have to some extent notified at the beginning of the last book. Most strange of all, however much from time to time the desire for seclusion which innate in me renewed its impulse, the thought of increased worldly advancement likewise gained strength. With this provision secured of appropriate sustenance and due supply of bodily vigour⁶ on which the success of every undertaking depends, I withdrew from various other pre-occupations and turned my attention strenuously to military matters, and like those exclusively occupied in business, whom more solemn considerations do not affect, severing not the night from day, I sat at the gate of expectation. Since in this profession centres the interest of life and

⁶ He required a large provision. His enormous appetite needed for its gratification or surfeit twenty-two *seers* of solid food daily. See Vol. I. Biography, xxviii. Both Abul Fazl and his brother Faizi entered the military service, then the only profession. See Vol. I. Biography, xv.

it adorns the acquisition of perfect and accurate judgment, in uniting the coruscation of political ability with the glitter of the sword, my whole ambition was to perform some service and to dare some signal deed in honour of this chosen profession, which would astonish even experienced statesmen and amaze the perusers of the history of the ancients, in order that the duties I had undertaken might be adequately fulfilled. This desire every moment increased, but the inopportuneness of the season suffered me not to speak. I had come from a religious house and a college to the royal court.

[Abul Fazl's secret longings gratified by Akbar's command to him to write the history of his reign—the other courtiers envy him.]

Those who regard outward circumstances only might impute designs to me that had never crossed my mind, and I judged from appearances that if this secret intention got wind, they would blame me and loosen the tongue of reproach. But since the luminous mind of majesty is a mirror of verities and a world-displaying cup,⁷ without representation on my part or communication, the king vouchsafed to favour and honour with a commission my obscure personality that was unassisted by patronage, and raised me to an exalted rank and to the degree of a very distinguished command.⁸ For some days among the learned at their meetings considerable [P. 253] jealousy was excited, and the courtiers had for a long time banded together in envy against me. It was a strange coincidence that I should be about the arsenal in search of a sword, while fate would force a pen into a master hand. I was examining the burnish of the lance-head while destiny

⁷ The cup or mirror of Jamshid, as well as of Solomon, Cyrus, and of Alexander, which mirrored the universe, according to Oriental tradition.

⁸ He received in 1585, the command of a thousand horse. In 1592 he was promoted to be commander of two thousand horse, and about 1595 to the command of two thousand five hundred horse, and became one of the *grandees* of the empire. See Vol. I. xv, xviii, and xxi.

was sharpening the point of the reed in order that the ordinances of the sovereign might be reverently proclaimed in the publication of these important records. I was a prey to conflicting emotions. Since I had not the capacity for this office, and my mind had no inclination to this kind of historiography, I was on the point of declaring my incompetence and standing aside, withdrawing from so onerous a task. But as I was impressed with His Majesty's knowledge of things that are hidden and with the obligation of responding to his favours by some signal service, I was unable to decline his command. The thought then occurred to me that His Majesty had in view my own application and industry as well as the literary capacity of my brethren,⁹ so that the materials which I might with indefatigable assiduity collect together, that accomplished and eloquent writer [Fayzi] might harmoniously set in order and thus bring to completion this stupendous task. In a little while under the strenuous support of a will of miraculous efficacy, I opened my eyes to an interior illumination, and reflected that the royal command was a magic inspiration to literary effort and a talisman for the illumining of wisdom. With a sincere mind and a lofty determination this complex of sorrow and joy set his face to the duty. My chief reliance was in this, that by the grace of the divine favour, having diligently collected the necessary facts and given material embodiment to their spiritualized form, the eulogist of the court of the Caliphate, the erudite scholar of the Imperial House, the first writer of his age, the laureate among accomplished poets, Shaykh Abu'l Fayz-i-Fayzi my elder brother and superior, would graciously supervise it, and under the correction of that master of style, a fresh texture would be hand-woven into a fabric of beauty.

[Just after one-half of this book had been written, Abul Fazl's collaborator and guide, his elder brother Faizi died,

⁹ For the names of these see Vol. I., xxxiii.

but our author steeled his heart to carry his task to completion, in spite of grief and heavy administrative duties.]

Scarce half of the first book had been written, when destiny worked its spell, and that free spirit in the fulness of its knowledge, took its last journey and afflicted my heart with an exceeding grief. When, by the talisman of the royal sympathies, I was recalled from the desire of aimless wandering to the city of service, manifold kindnesses were as a balm to the open wound of my soul, and I applied myself zealously to my great task. A light dawned on me as to the object of the royal command and the aim of its lofty view. I brought my mind to that consideration and with a prayer to the Almighty, I set out on the road. On the one hand lay the painful feeling of incompetency and a heart overwhelmed with affliction and stress of occupation which no material successes however numerous could remedy, and the ulcers of which no profusion of outward gratifications could salve, —on the other was the ebb and flow of the sea of my heart wherein human efforts were of no avail, nor could the door of its secret retirement be closed and the busy world kept out ! How can I describe the violent conflict of these two unusual states of mind, or with what capability express the inter-currency of this strange dual operation. The first conjured up in the clear recesses of my mind, a fanciful play of wave and leap of fountain with swirl of rain and fall of dew ; it wove thousand fictions and suggested frequent supernatural interventions [P. 254] and seemed to assure him who chose it, of the attainment of the truth and the honour of presidency in the state-council of wisdom. From the second, a vision of flinty stones, of strewn fragments of brick and as of clod-heaps and scatterings of blackened soil appearing from the same source of discernment, arose with a warning aspect. Coarseness of speech, scurrility, vauntings and vain babble of which the characteristics are a moral decadence and a desire of associating with the base, time after time, in a novel

guise came flaunting by. Accompanying this miserable condition and disorder of mind, the stress of helplessness and isolation now and again received a fresh impulse. Although it is the way of the world seldom to form bonds of attachment, but rather the more constantly to sever the ties of friendship, my plain speaking and discernment of hypocrisy co-operated with this worldly tendency. Some friends of Baber's household and intimates of long standing withdrew from association with me. With the burden of affairs on my shoulders and journeying over inequalities of ground and moving through perilous paths, how could I in utter loneliness, reach half way on the road, or when arrive at my destination? But by the advent to the gardens of blessedness of one or two godly friends who in this dearth of manhood were obtained by me, I triumphed over all my difficulties.

[Akbar's sympathy and interest hearten Abul Fazl in writing this book.]

Strangely enough, with all this apparatus that inspired fear and this struggle within and without, I did not withhold my hand from writing nor did my resolution flag, nay rather, every moment fresh vigour was aroused in me and this momentous conflict grew stronger and the strife of the flesh and the spirit increased until the light of truth shone forth and my difficulties were solved, the wondrous effects of the holy spirit of His Majesty were again evidenced in me, and my heart and vision were flooded with an extraordinary light. The writings of the wise of ancient times to some extent corroborated the accuracy of my own course and exculpated my sorry conscience with its ignoble tendencies. What the sages of old affirm is this, that the leader of the caravans of hallowed sovereignty is supreme over high and low, and that the pleasant mead of spiritual and temporal concerns blooms fair under the beneficent lustre of such unique wonder of the world of wisdom : moreover that the visible ruler who is the chosen among thousands of mankind to reduce to order the

scattered elements of social organisation holds sway over all men, but his power extends only to their bodies and finds no access to their souls. The lords of spiritual dominion, on the other hand, have no authority save over pure consciences, as the practice of the saints in general and of all holy men illustrates. The ordinary class of professors of learning and the shallow sciolists of the world influence solely the minds of the vulgar, and the effect of their instruction is to be found only in such waste ground. But as the monarch of our time has been appointed sovereign likewise over the invisible world, his sacred inspiration has wrought these extraordinary effects in me who am rude of speech, ignorant and helpless, and raised me from the deeps of ignorance to the heights of knowledge.

With joyful omens blest, my strain
Shall celebrate his glorious reign;
His praises shall my pen proclaim,
And here enshrine his royal name.

[How Abul Fazl secured the materials of his history.]
[P. 255] My first care was to collect by the aid of heaven, all the transactions of his enduring reign, and I used exceptional and unprecedented diligence in order to record the chief events of my own time. In many of these occurrences I bore a personal share, and I had a perfect knowledge of the under-currents and secret intrigues of State, to say nothing of the ordinary drift of public affairs. And since the insinuations of rumour had prejudiced me and I was not sure of my own memory, I made various inquiries of the principal officers of State and of the grandees and other well-informed dignitaries; and not content with numerous oral statements, I asked permission to put them into writing, and for each event I took the written testimony of more than twenty intelligent and cautious persons. The flagrant contradictory statements of eye-witnesses had reached my ears and amazed me, and my

difficulties increased. Here was date of an event not far distant—the actors in the scenes and transactions actually present—their directing spirit exalted on the throne of actual experience—and I with my eyes open observing these manifold discrepancies. By the blessing of daily-increasing favour I determined to remedy this, and set my mind to work out a solution. The perplexity disentangled itself and my bewildered state of mind began to grow calm. By deep reflection and a careful scrutiny, taking up the principal points in which there was general agreement, my satisfaction increased, and where the narrators differed from each other I based my presentation of facts on a footing of discriminate investigation of exact and cautious statements, and this somewhat set my mind at ease. Where an event had equal weight of testimony on both sides, or anything reached me opposed to my own view of the question, I submitted it to His Majesty and freed myself from responsibility. By the blessing of the rising fortunes of the State and the sublimity of the royal wisdom, together with the perfect sincerity of the inquirer and his wakeful destiny, I was completely successful and arrived at the summit of my wishes.

[How Abul Fazl worked up the raw materials collected for his history.]

When I had safely traversed these difficult defiles, a work of considerable magnitude was the result. But since at this formidable stage, in the arrangement of these events no minute regard to details had taken place, and their chronological sequence had not been satisfactorily adjusted, I commenced the methodizing of my materials anew, and began to rewrite the whole, and I took infinite pains especially bestowing much attention on the chronology of the Divine Era. And since I had the assistance of the highest scientific experts, this task also was with facility completed and a separate table was drawn out. When through supernatural illumination, the announcement of a new basis of computa-

tion entered the ear of intelligence, that old and tattered garment was cast aside and a robe of honour newly woven of grace, was substituted, and by the power of the Being who created speech, this great work, with all the difficulties it presented, was brought to a conclusion, and numerous expressions of satisfaction were felicitously evoked.

As this world of tribulation is not a home for the wise of heart, the more so that friends who live for the happiness to come are covered by the veil of concealment and on account of the ingratitude of the incapable, have withdrawn their hearts from participation in the false shows of its delusive scene, I looked upon each of my days as though it were to be my last, and employed myself only in the preparations for my final journey. In this sorrowful condition I hastened along my road, and the labours on the fulfilment of which I had counted were not ordered according to my desire.

[He repeatedly revised his composition to give it literary grace.] As by [P. 256] the decree of destiny my life was still prolonged, for the fourth time I renewed the task and gave it all my solicitude. Although my first efforts were now directed to remove all superfluous repetitions, and give continuity to the easy flow of my exposition, I perceived the incomplete arrangement of my fresh materials, and the due ordering of this was undertaken. And since I was new to the road and stricken with grief and friendless, an exceeding depression of spirit came upon me, in that, with all my toil and with such excessive care these many lapses had occurred and such frequent errors had appeared. What would be the result, and where would it all end? I began a fifth revision and went over the work from the beginning. Although all my acknowledged endeavours were directed to immortalize these events and to place their issues in due order, yet as sagacious writers consider that *verse* is as the savour of salt to prose, I took much pains in the introduction of a few stanzas which should be in harmonious accord with

the composition, and many a correction and emendation was made, independently of any consideration of the cavils of numberless critics. The truth is that men close their eyes in regard to their own faults and their own offspring. However much they may oppose the feeling, these defects are approved as merits. I who have made it a practice to be critical of self and indulgent towards others, could employ no collyrium regarding this question, nor devise any remedy for this defect of vision, but on this five-fold revision a rumour of this new development spread abroad. Some of my acquaintances joined in supporting me; others were as unanimous in an underhand depreciation. I formed a resolution, for the sixth time, to set my mind free of its waverings of suggestions, and to exercise the most minute and fastidious criticism; but the frequent calls upon me made by His Majesty left me no time.

I was compelled therefore to present him with this fifth revision, and was rewarded with a perpetual satisfaction.

What mine hath ever yielded gem so fair?
What tongue-born treasure can with this compare?
Beneath each letter is a world concealed,
Each word's expanse shows worlds on worlds revealed.
Its every pearl bedecks the earth and sky,
And if ye see it not—be yours the penalty.

It is my hope that by the blessings of a sincere intention and its own merits, the task which was set before my grateful heart may be happily concluded, and my mind be disburdened in some measure from the distress of its many anxieties. Within the space of seven years, by the aid of a resolute will and a lofty purpose, a compendious survey covering a period from Adam down to the sacred person of the prince regnant, has been concluded, and from the birth of His Imperial Majesty to this day, which is the 42nd of the

Divine Era,¹⁰ and according to the lunar computation 1006, the occurrences of fifty-five years of that nursling of grace have been felicitously recorded, and my mind has been lightened in some degree of its stupendous burden. [P. 257]

The princely heart that virtue dowers,
For him gems bloom instead of flowers,
And hill and dale his kingdom round
Shall with their monarch's praise resound.

It is my expectation to write in four volumes¹¹ a record of the transactions of the royal house during one hundred and twenty years, which are four generations, that it may stand as a memorial for those who seek knowledge in justice, and with the Institutions of His Majesty as the concluding book, I purposed the completion of the Akbarnāmah in these five volumes. By the aid of the Almighty three have been written, and many a secret of wisdom has been revealed and a treasure of truth weighed in the balance.

I bear from wisdom's inmost store
The royal House this treasured lore,
And pray its justice and its grace
May ne'er my memory efface.
And let this loyal offering be
Accepted of its Majesty.
May God His favour grant benign,
And His acceptance deign with thine,
And raise its dignity on high
With thy name's glorious currency,
That it from thee may win renown
And link my fortunes with the throne.

[The last two sections of the *Akbarnamah* are yet to be written.]

¹⁰ The starting point of the Divine Era was Friday, the 5th of Rabi' II. A.H. 963 (19th February 1556).

¹¹ See Vol. I, Preface.

If destiny in its wondrous workings gives me leisure and capricious fortune, opportunity, the remaining two books shall be satisfactorily terminated and form a history of deeds replete with attraction. If not, let others, guided by grace and a propitious fate, set down, year by year, the events of this enduring reign, with a lofty resolution and unremitting industry, in right understanding, with a noble purpose and in a spirit of freedom, rendering populous the habitations of Church and State and fertilizing the gardens of grace and nature with refreshing waters. Let them not forget this obscure wanderer in the desert of aberration and in their glad work acknowledge their obligations to me who first displayed the continuous succession of this series, and suggested to them the manner of its record. But if this be not approved and they desire, by recommencing on a new method or fashion of language of the day, to compile the transactions of this never-fading dominion,

Be it unto thy peoples' welfare, Lord,
Beneath the shadow of King Akbar's sway.